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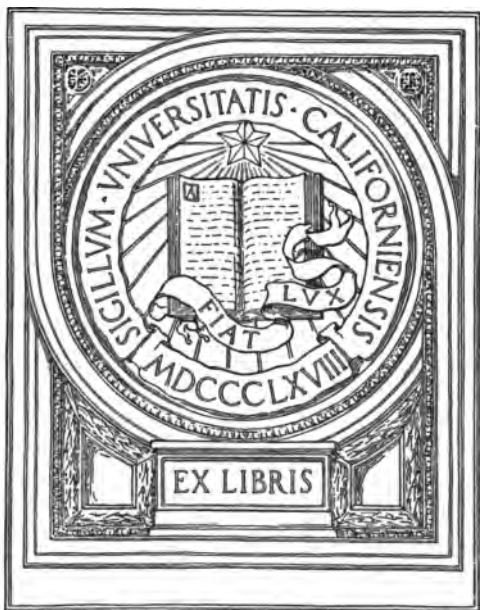
Jungle Pioneering in Gondland

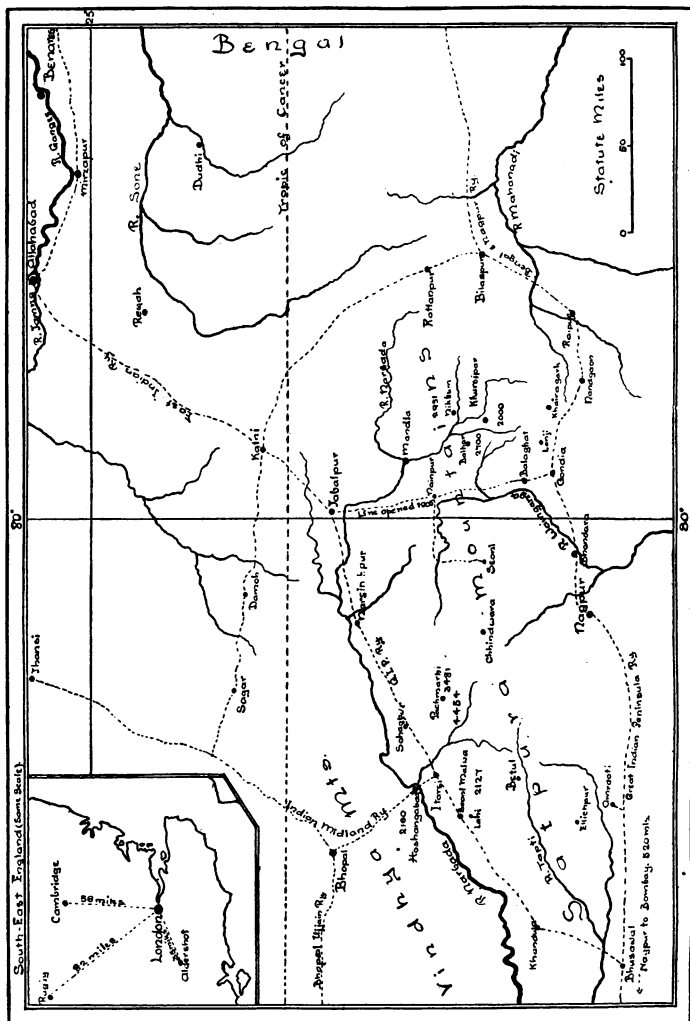


Arch. Wm. McMillan.

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GIFT OF
HORACE W. CARPENTIER





CENTRAL INDIA AND CENTRAL PROVINCES

Jungle Pioneering in Gondland

BY

A. W. McMILLAN

(Now of L.M.S.)

"I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the Kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of that Kingdom, it shall be given away or kept, only as by giving or keeping of it I shall most promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity."

—DAVID LIVINGSTONE

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PREFACE

FROM 1868 to 1872 and 1880 to 1884 I passed more than eight of the happiest years of my life as Deputy-Commissioner in charge of the then new district of Bálághát ("above the passes"). This tract of more than three thousand square miles—one quarter well cultivated rice plain-land, about one thousand feet above the sea, the remainder the southern part of the Satpura Mountains, from 2,500 to 2,763 feet high, the most remote and wild parts of the Bhandará and Mandlá districts—was made into a separate district by the great administrator, Sir R. Temple, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, with the object of inducing the good cultivating classes of the plains to take up the many thousand acres of first-class land amongst the successive ranges of hills above. The whole country was without one made road of any kind, and while the ordinary country carts could slowly traverse the rough tracts in the plains below, there were no wheeled vehicles above the hills, for none could possibly get there, unless

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taken to pieces and carried on men's heads, and, when there, could not be moved about unless empty. Colonel Newmarch—a Deputy-Commissioner of Bhandará—in about 1865 reported that the foot-tracks up the hills were “fit only for Gonds and monkeys”!

The whole of the uplands were practically covered with primæval forest, with scattered clearings, made and scratched, not cultivated, by a scanty, shifting population of Gonds, while at still greater intervals the less rugged slopes of the hills were temporarily cleared by the Baigás. These wild and simple aborigines were amongst the most interesting of my charge. The Baigás, especially the Bharotias, the wildest of the three tribes, were my particular care. Some of the Gonds had one or two ploughs and bullocks; but a Baigá's whole stock-in-trade consisted of one axe, which cost sixpence and lasted a lifetime. Both Gonds and Baigás began their clearings with “bewarh” (forest cut down and burnt where it lay), and continued with “dáhia” (wood brought and spread on the land and burnt). The Baigás used no plough, so that their clearings were soon again covered with forest. Both Baigás and Gonds, uncontaminated by the low castes of the plains, I

found cheerful, happy, peaceful, honest and truthful. The Baigás especially were so; their word could be relied on. I have heard Baigá witnesses in my Court, when charged by the accused with telling lies, exclaim, "What!—a Baigá tell a lie? Never!"

Intimate as was my acquaintance with the whole district—nearly every village and hamlet (tolá), and very nearly all the people—I am glad that the Mission I advocated in my "Notes on the Baigás" has been so successful; and I hope that the interesting anecdotes and experiences of Mr. McMillan, narrated in this book, will draw the attention of the good people of this country to these remote but promising subjects of his Majesty our King.

Space compels me merely to add that the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Johnson, in 1882 came to my house at Bálághát to see about two hundred men and women of the Baigás, who came down from the hills to meet him.

ALFRED BLOOMFIELD, *Colonel,*
Indian Army (retired).

GLEMHAM GROVE,
SAXMUNDHAM, SUFFOLK:
November, 1906.

INTRODUCTION

It has been my happy privilege to spend five years in one of the most isolated districts of the Indian Mission-field, during the greater part of which time I have lived a nomadic life amongst degraded aboriginal hill-tribes, often for long periods without seeing a European or visiting any centre of civilization.

It was far from my intention to write a detailed account of what I experienced during those years; but, since coming to England, certain friends persuaded me to put into book-form some of the incidents I had been relating at missionary meetings, thinking my story might in this way afford interest to a larger section of the Christian public than the few thousands who have listened to my addresses.

The illustrations have been made from photographs taken by myself, most of them places and subjects which, as far as I know, have never been produced in a missionary journal.

A. W. M.

GOFF'S OAK, HERTS:

November, 1906

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Jungle Pioneering in Gondland

CHAPTER I

ABORIGINES INDEED

OUR great Indian Empire may well be likened to an interesting museum, in which one may find and study both the highest and the lowest types of the human race. There are the cultured Aryans, with their ancient civilization, their Vedic hymns and historical poems, showing themselves capable of reaching the highest positions in our English Universities, and, away in the hills, tribes of Aborigines, who in many respects might be classified with the uncivilized races of Africa.

Whilst volumes have been written about the Hindus, until recent years the Aborigines of India have remained more or less in obscurity. These wild peoples, driven into the forest fastnesses and mountainous regions thousands of years ago by the invading Aryans from Central Asia, have remained in the jungles to

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this day, and are still in a state very little advanced from their primitive condition. Having no written history, all that may be known of their past must be gathered either from their legends, or from references to them in the ancient historical poems of the Hindus.

After long centuries of isolation, no wonder they are exceedingly shy and reserved. When in the presence of more civilized persons, especially Europeans, they appear all but dumb, giving the briefest replies and seldom daring to ask a question. When I was privileged to carry the Gospel into certain villages hitherto unvisited by evangelist or white man, the natives would often run from me as though for their lives!

On one occasion, whilst passing through such a village, I told the headman that I would return the next morning and sing some hymns, and tell the "good news" to him and his people. To my surprise, on arriving I found the place deserted, the entire population having fled into the jungle!

This timidity can be overcome, however, by personal contact and kindness, as the following incident will show. Being somewhat discouraged, though not a little amused, at this strange happening, I crossed a river

near by and followed a narrow footpath which led through a patch of jungle. After a while I heard voices, and looking up saw that I had come upon a small group of grass huts. Children were running out to meet me, and even the women, instead of hiding or running away, were greeting me with smiles. I was amazed, for I knew they had not had a white visitor before; but presently I recognised them to be neighbours of mine, who, a few months previously, had left the vicinity of my village owing to the ravages of a man-eating tiger.

The words, "Little things please little minds," are true in the case of many a hill-man of Central India, if one may judge by their delight on being shown pictures, tools, English boots or wearing apparel, or any other article of everyday use. Whilst visiting a certain man's house on one occasion, I saw a wild bison's horn—evidently of little use except as an oil-receptacle—and offered to buy it to keep as a curio. The old man would not be tempted with money, but when I offered him a golden-syrup tin he at once struck a bargain and became the proud possessor of this "sweet" memento from the White Man's Land!

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It will be readily understood, from the foregoing description of these Aborigines, that they are easily overmastered when they come into contact with Hindus and Mohammedans, who, alas! have not sought to uplift but only to oppress them. Jungles are being rapidly opened up and exploited, railways and roads are being constructed, minerals and timber are being taken down to the plains, the many centuries of isolation are ending, and the hiding-places of these ancient hillmen are now being roped into civilization. The British Government is opening village-schools in the mountainous districts with remarkable rapidity, and it now remains for Christendom to show these dark and superstitious tribesmen that Christianity is infinitely superior to Hinduism or Mohammedanism as a civilizing and elevating power.



1.—KHURSIPAR GONDS (*See Chap. II*)



2.—GROUP OF BAIGAS IN FESTIVE ATTIRE (*See Chap. III*)

CHAPTER II

"ONLY GONDS"

IN the District of Bálághát, in the Central Provinces of India (eighty-one degrees east longitude, twenty-two degrees north latitude, named in some maps Burhá), are to be found but two aboriginal tribes—Gonds and Baigás (see Illustrations 1 and 2), the former being the greatest in number of all hill-tribes. In appearance they are sturdier and more stalwart than Hindus, of a darker colour, with prominent cheek-bones and thick lips. The women are well-built, of average height, and exceedingly fond of jewellery, often wearing many pounds' weight of brass, pewter or glass upon their ankles, arms, neck, fingers and toes. The men wear very little clothing, while the women usually have a long piece of cloth wound about their bodies, called a "sári."

The Gonds are generally poor, yet they are, on the whole, more contented than most

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people would be under similar circumstances. Whilst a small proportion by industry and thrift keep themselves beyond the reach of actual want, the vast majority live a precarious existence, and, like millions of India's ordinary peasants, would be brought to the verge of starvation by a year of scarcity.

At the same time, a season of drought does not affect the Gonds so seriously as it would the Hindus living in the plains, who depend so much upon a good rainfall for their rice-crops, especially when the plants are young and tender, or during the process of transplantation. Then, again, the Gonds mostly live upon inferior millets, which they sow on clearings in the jungle and on uneven slopes, and which do not require the level swamp so essential for rice-growing. They also find much that is edible in the forests, such as wild berries, roots and herbs, and catch small fish in the narrow streams.

In Gondland the villages are scattered, small and dirty. Often in the loneliest and wildest spots one will find "tolas" (groups of small huts), several of these sharing one name and constituting a "village," which an itinerant missionary would find very tiring work to visit. The so-called "streets" are

usually narrow, uneven and stony, and during the wet season very muddy, being well churned by the traffic of cattle and goats. (See Illustration 3.)

There is also a variety of obnoxious odours about a Gond village, for the inhabitants unceremoniously throw their ashes, husks, vegetable-parings and what not into the roadways, and very often in close proximity to their doors. The ubiquitous filthy black pig is also generally in evidence, horrifying any orthodox Hindu who may be visiting on Government or other business.

The houses are low, dark, and without ventilation, being built of mud and bamboo. A glimpse inside the tiny doorway will reveal black walls and a still blacker roof, caused by the continually ascending smoke from their wood and stubble fires. A piece of plaited bamboo-work is placed at the entry at night to serve as a door, which, of course, is minus hinges or lock; but as there are no valuables to guard, it answers the purpose well.

There is such a language as Gondi (which only a few years ago was reduced to writing), but it is now becoming more and more a dead language, only used in some of the denser jungles, and then as a household tongue,

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Hindi being the language usually spoken by the Gonds to-day.

Owing to their close contact with wild beasts, the Gonds are very bold and courageous. Whilst the average Hindu often shrinks from ascending the hills and penetrating the jungles, the Gond will drive his primitive wooden plough into the densest forest. This entails a constant warfare with beasts of prey, who not only destroy countless cattle, but many human beings. I once saw a powerful Gond who had been terribly mauled by a tiger. The beast had sprung upon him from behind, and was savagely clutching his shoulders. Summoning his great strength, he gave the animal such a blow in the stomach with his right elbow that it had to withdraw a few yards to regain breath, during which time the man was able to make his escape.

On another occasion a Gond, being attacked by a tiger, fought so courageously whilst being dragged along the grass, that the beast was thrice compelled to relinquish its hold; then, alas! it seized the poor fellow by the throat, and the struggle soon ended. Speedily as possible we organized a search-party, but found only some human hair, two or three

bones, a scrap or two of cloth and an axe. But, then, forty hours had elapsed since the tragedy occurred.

Though daring and bold, the Gonds are not warlike. Intellectually they are very deficient, not one in five hundred being able to read or write, and they live quite ignorant of the great outside world, with its many peoples, its wonders of creation, and its inventive skill. Polygamy is common among them, it being considered perfectly legitimate for a Gond or Baigá to marry as many wives as he can afford to maintain. Caste is recognised, but, as a system, is perhaps not so complicated and confusing as among the Hindus.

The drink-curse is also very conspicuous among these people, and is probably largely accountable for the state of degradation into which they have fallen. The native liquor is made from a blossom called the “mohuá,” and a very small quantity is sufficient to cause intoxication. The traffic being under Government control, the natives have the idea that by drinking to excess they are helping to swell the revenue, and when a missionary has included the subject of temperance reform in his preaching, he has been accused of disloyalty to national interests!

During the early part of 1906, however, a very encouraging movement sprang up among the Gonds. Having discovered, by comparing their degraded position with the more prosperous and abstinent Hindus, that the excessive drinking of "dáru" (liquor) had so harmed and impoverished them as a tribe, they determined to effect great temperance reforms. The headmen and chiefs of certain villages called together a local "pancháyat" (committee), and, after freely discussing the question, decided to make the drinking of "dáru" a punishable offence among the Gonds, inflicting upon the transgressor a fine of fifty rupees and temporary banishment from his caste. They also authorised a deputation to carry the news and recommendations to the "pancháyat" of neighbouring villages. It seems possible, therefore, that a small nation of teetotalers may be "born in a day." If so, the benefits accruing to this people will be inestimable, for drunkenness has not only been prevalent at the weekly markets, but has also disgraced their religious ceremonies, weddings, and other social functions. Naturally, the drink-sellers were up in arms against this new development, and have complained to the

Government; but both the Commissioner and Deputy-Commissioner are showing their sympathy with the people in this grand reformation. This is all very encouraging to those who desire the temporal and spiritual well-being of this benighted race.

The Gond, like most Orientals, is very conservative, exceedingly slow in his movements, thought and speech, and a long while coming to a decision about the most trivial affair. This is especially noticeable when he is making a purchase at a bazaar, for he gives the matter of spending a farthing or two the most careful consideration! No wonder, therefore, he is slow in changing the religion to which he has been accustomed for so many centuries; but when he does so, he makes a steadfast Christian. In this respect he differs from some of the lower castes of Hindus, who are often most unstable in their religious concerns.

Indeed, even unconverted, the Gonds make firm and lasting friends. Amongst such Theloo Bhoi stands conspicuous. He was an interesting habitant of Khursipár village; wrinkled with age, father of three grown-up sons, and a successful farmer. He had a very happy disposition, and I have never known

him to be intoxicated, or use bad language—a very common sin. He was a regular visitor at my mud bungalow, and thus learned not a little concerning the “good tidings.” During one of our confidential chats, after he had had a season of illness, I remarked how sad I would have been had he died.

“Yes,” said he, “I believe you would, Sahib, because I know you love me; but my own sons often say how glad they will be when ‘the old man’ is out of the way, and they are able to portion out my property.”

Shortly after this conversation, desiring to add his portrait to my collection, I got him posed before my camera. Not satisfied with my first attempt, however, I promised him another sitting after I had made a tour through some distant villages. But when I returned, alas! I heard the sad news of dear old Theloo’s death. During his few days’ illness he was constantly asking his sons to send for me. Again and again they told him I was over seventy miles away (three days’ journey); but to the very end he was pleading: “Go and call my friend the Sahib. Tell him I want to see him before I die. I know he will come at once. Why won’t you call him?” And thus dear old Theloo left this world,



3.—“HIGH STREET,” KHURSIPAR (*See Page 7*)



4.—A “HAUNTED” POOL (*See Page 29*)

and I was bereft of a faithful, true and loving friend.

"Only Gonds, and like the very beasts of the jungle," they say of themselves: "what can *we* understand?" And yet their very ignorance and simplicity should appeal to us to endeavour to "win them to Christ by love"—my late revered mother's dying message to her only son.

CHAPTER III

AMONGST THE BAIGÁS

To mention the very name of "Baigá" in the presence of a Hindu or Mohammedan is to call forth a cynical smile, for he at once pictures a wild man of the woods as nearly approaching an ape in his mode of living and habits as he can well imagine.

Whilst tourists cross the vast Indian Empire, and, passing through chief cities, gaze upon the highly-coloured clothing of a crowd of ordinary natives at a railway-station or in a bazaar, they never dream that in the recesses of the mountains live wild men, a glimpse of whom would cause them to think they were in central Africa itself. To visit the haunts of such people would mean leaving the beaten tracks and penetrating far into the hills (for Baigás never approach a civilized centre); but it would be worth the fatiguing journey, for to turn from the fine streets of Calcutta and visit a Baigá village in the jungles

would reveal a more striking contrast than if one were suddenly conveyed from Fleet Street to some Kaffir kraals in an Earl's Court Exhibition.

The Baigás are a distinct tribe, although in matters of religion they are similar to the Gonds. They are decidedly wilder than the latter, and generally live right away from other tribes in the jungle itself, with the bushes, tall grass and trees close against the fence of their compounds. If they live where there are Gonds or Hindu peasants, they build their huts separate from the main village, forming a hamlet of their own at a spot where they can have the privacy and wild surroundings they so truly love, and without which they cannot be happy. Their huts—very low and small—are usually arranged in a quadrangle; the doorways are about four feet high, the centre beam being seldom more than eight feet from the ground, and the walls are generally made of grass.

On one occasion I spent a night in a Baigá village, and, owing to the heavy rain, slept in the priest's house instead of the open air. Besides a dog, a goat, and some fowls, there were fifteen human beings sprawling upon the mud floor in slumber!

The furniture of such a house is not extravagant, for probably a mere rupee would buy a Baigá's possessions! A piece of plaited bamboo-matting spread upon the ground serves the purpose of a bedstead, and earthen pots, costing from half a farthing to a penny each (according to size) are used as saucepans, kettles, and pails. The large leaves of a wonderfully useful creeper, called the "mohalain," are sewn together with grass and used for plates; these are thrown away after a meal, thus obviating the "washing-up," which seems so monotonous a task to many a domesticated daughter of civilization. A fishing-net or trap may be seen in a corner; this has cost nothing, being made from a split-up bamboo. The baskets for gathering berries, or cleaning and sifting grain, are all home made, and have also cost nothing beyond labour. An axe that has been bought for four or six annas (pence) completes the list of necessities, and is, after all, perhaps the most important article.

Baigá men are usually very slim and wiry, exceedingly nimble, and as they tread upon leaves or twigs in the jungle they seem so light-footed that they make scarcely a sound. They are wonderfully adapted to their surroundings, and it is intensely interesting

to watch them stalking an animal or bird: they can move or creep as stealthily as a leopard. The women are much more sturdy and strong-looking than the men, and are often tattooed with various designs, such as flowers, trees, birds, peacocks, animals, and scorpions. They are very strong, and are usually the mothers of large families. Polygamy exists, and is not considered dishonourable; also the remarriage of widows is permissible, as among the Gonds. Their children always appear to be fat and healthy, and, on account of an inherited dislike of water, are generally very dirty! They are often engaged to be married on the very day of their birth, named within five days, and actually married when well into their teens, usually at a later age than the children of Hindus.

The Baigás are a restless people, changing their place of residence, if not annually, every two or three years. Probably this is owing to their old system of cultivation, known as "bewarh." When "bewarh" was practised, they would cut down the jungle, with all its fine bamboo clumps and trees, about the month of January. This cleared space was allowed to remain untouched until the beginning of June, just before the annual rain is

due. Then, at this the end of the hot season, the whole of the timber, bamboo, and dry scrub was set alight, and a few days after, when the rain began to fall, common millet-seed was sown in the ashes. Excellent crops were obtained in this way for a minimum amount of labour; but the British Government has put a stop to this wholesale destruction of bush, and, instead, these jungles are proving a fruitful source of revenue by the sale of grass, bamboo, and timber to the inhabitants of the plains. The Baigás themselves consider that in this way their jungle has been stolen; but they are unmindful of the needs of others, nor do they think of the requirements of the coming generations.

Only in certain parts of the Central Provinces is "bewarh" still permissible. During a walk of fifty or sixty miles recently, through some mountains in a small native state, I saw countless hill-sides cleared in this fashion, and only one plough came within my notice during those three days' travel. Moreover, whilst their crops are still growing, the Baigás erect tiny grass shelters in their clearings and live there for months, in order to protect their crops from the ravages of wild animals. To see a shelter of this kind, with a family living

in the solemn loneliness of an Indian jungle, is a most impressive sight.

One night, whilst living in this condition of peril, a Baigá woman awoke to see a glaring tiger about to maul her grown-up son. Though unarmed, she thrust a burning log into the animal's face, and thus saved her son's life. It is worth noting that both mother and son have been steadfast Christians for the past ten years or more.

Ever since "beware" was forbidden, Government has endeavoured in many ways to encourage the Baigás to settle down to regular cultivation, like the Gonds; but, in spite of gifts of land and bullocks, the attempt has not been very successful. A goodly number borrow bullocks for a few weeks in June and July with which to plough, and then sow sufficient seed to supply themselves with food for the rest of the year; but one would have to walk for many days before meeting a Baigá who made any pretence of being a regular farmer.

Moreover, I have never met a Baigá in regular employment; they simply scorn the idea of service, and would think it beneath them to do more than an occasional day's work for a local farmer, and then only to earn

a few pice with which to purchase salt and chillies to flavour stews, which they make of berries, wild fruits, and roots gathered from the jungle. A common occupation is the making of baskets and mats, or a kind of handleless umbrella of split bamboo and overlapping leaves. (See Illustration 3.)

They are adepts at trapping animals and peacocks, hence one feels it wise to walk warily when near the haunts of these men. They are also very skilful with the spear, and often, by creeping stealthily within range, will wound or kill a stag before it is aware of their presence. They seldom hunt carnivora; but one Baigá (named Bhádu) had a wide reputation for being a fearless hunter. He speared or shot fifty-two tigers, and nearly 170 panthers, leopards, bears, and hyenas, not to mention ferocious bison, deer, and boars. I once saw the skulls of nine bison in a heap outside his house. He was a perfect stranger to fear, and on account of his long experience and success as a hunter, Government officials often sought his help when on shooting expeditions in the Bálághát District.

Baigás are, as a rule, even more timid and shy than Gonds. On one occasion, after toiling up-hill for nearly three miles, I found I

had unwittingly come within thirty yards of a group of huts. Just then a Baigá, followed by his wife, carrying a small boy on her shoulder, came out of the jungle, and on catching sight of me, having never seen a white man there before, began to run away. Calling them back, I managed to assure them that I was not an enemy come to take them away to a foreign land; so they returned, and we all squatted down together quite amicably. Presently the Baigá drew his little boy towards him, and in tones of awe said: "Look, my son, God has come down to our village!"

CHAPTER IV

HEATHENISH SUPERSTITIONS

ONE July evening, after nightfall, I was returning to my bungalow, clad in a black-caped waterproof, with a hood over my pith helmet (it being the wet season), and was making my way as best I could by clinging to, and clambering along, a bamboo fence. Intent upon making progress, I had not noticed the approach of two Gond women, who were also picking their way through the mud. At that moment I let go the fence and sprang across a puddle on to a patch of stony ground. This sudden action, causing my cape to rise like wings, so terrified these women that with loud shrieks they turned and fled into an adjoining house, one even falling on the way with fright! Hearing their screams, a number of men came running from different directions armed with sticks, thinking some one had been attacked by a wild beast. Eager to reveal my identity, I hastened to the house

where the women had sought refuge, and on making myself known their countenances suddenly changed, and the women exclaimed: "Why, we felt sure you were Satan himself just about to spring upon us, especially when we saw the huge black wings!"

Another incident will show how firmly these jungle people believe in the personality of the devil. In the Bálághát District is an orphanage in which are several score of children—a sad legacy from the famines of 1897 and 1900. I quote the story word for word from "Jungle Jottings,"* February, 1902:—

Some people don't believe in the devil: we do. Mrs. W— reports a week, at the beginning of December, when her work seemed a veritable fight with the powers of darkness. There was a great deal of sickness among the orphans, and one girl had died. One evening, at dusk, one of the girls put her hand up to reach something from a high window-sill, and states that some one seized her hand from outside and scratched it as she, screaming, dragged it away. Next morning some scratches were visible on her hand. Later on the same night she had occasion to go outside the house, and met the devil! He said, "Why did you scream when I touched you?" She replied, "Because I was so frightened." He said, "I have taken one girl. I shall have another boy and another girl, and then smash all the bottles in the dispensary!"

*Edited by Mr. John Lampard (the original Pioneer Missionary in the Balaghat District), who, at the suggestion of Colonel Bloomfield, founded the "Balaghat Mission to the Gonds," and with whom the author has laboured for five happy years.

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The girl ran indoors and told the other girls what is related above. The great amount of sickness recently in the orphanage, the universal belief in evil spirits amongst these village people, and the girl's evident fright, all tended to produce a feeling of uneasiness, not to say fear, among the children.

Next day a boy died. So far as could be ascertained he had had no malady of any kind, and it is not surprising that the poor children regarded the event as confirming the truth of the girl's story. The alarm by this time was further increased by the statement of a Mohammedan employed by us that, after death, the spirit of the deceased haunts the scene of his departure from this world for forty days. At this time a girl lay dangerously ill, apparently dying, and all eyes were turned to her. Mrs. W—— says that she never prayed for anything as she prayed for that child's life, which was spared; but another boy died a few days later, and then one morning the dispensary was opened and all the bottles lay smashed upon the floor!

Among the now thoroughly frightened children the cry arose, "The devil is in the midst of us!" and our Brother and Sister W—— betook themselves to prayer. Opening "Daily Light," Mrs. W——'s eyes lighted upon, "The Lord is in the midst of thee!" Thanking God for the message, she called the children together and delivered it, earnestly assuring them that God was in the midst of them, was *for* them, and was greater than any or all who could be against them. This broke the spell. That night a little fellow of eight or nine years boldly entered the boys' dormitory (which was supposed to be the special haunt of the devil), saying, "The Lord is here, not the devil!" and from that time the alarm and fright subsided.

The belief in evil spirits is held by everybody, and, in any village, people can be found who will give similar circumstantial accounts about interviews with the devil. This story shows that these superstitious

fears, and their sometimes serious consequences, are not easily eradicated. . . . As for the facts of the matter, the scratches on the girl's hand were probably made by the rough brickwork in which the window is set; the poor little lad must, we think, have died of sheer fright, and the broken bottles we have never been able to account for.

Yet another satanic story. I was on a walking-tour in a very wild part, where it was impossible to take even a bullock-cart, and one evening was telling some one of my proposed plan for the morrow, which included a visit to a village called Dhamingaon.

"What is the use of going there?" said the man. There's no one living there: the place is desolate."

"But I went there myself not many months ago, and held a meeting in the courtyard of Teli Gauntiyá, the headman," I replied.

"Yes," that may be," said the man; "but, in the meantime Satan has harassed them to such an extent that they have all run away, and there isn't a family left now!"

Then came the story of a number of inexplicable burglaries. Satan, they said, came night after night into their houses and took away basketfuls of grain towards the river Tárhá, half a mile away, spilling a little now and then—and it is indeed difficult to imagine

a man having the pluck to wander about in the dark at night amongst the very lairs of tigers and panthers, for the Tárhá is in as wild and isolated a jungle as can be found in the Central Provinces. And so, unable to see a human figure, yet able to hear ghostly movements night after night, Teli Gauntiyá and the dozen families of Dhamingaon, terrified by "Satan's" pranks, removed all their possessions to a spot twenty miles distant, and built a new village!

Not only is Satan firmly believed in by these Aborigines, but he is supposed to be assisted by countless hordes of demons, evil-spirits, and imps. The very atmosphere is thought to be infested with these malevolent beings, so much so that if one merely yawns he has to snap his fingers in front of his mouth to prevent the entrance of an evil-spirit! Again, one may frequently see a heap of grain upon a threshing-floor, surrounded by a narrow line of white ashes, a tiny light burning near (a piece of rag in a mud saucer containing oil), and a few thick sticks stuck up here and there. The owner is harvesting, but has been unable to thoroughly clean this particular heap of grain before sunset, so is obliged to leave it on the

threshing-floor all night. Ask the meaning of this encircling line of ashes, the burning light, and the sticks, and he will tell you they are protections against "bhoots," or evil spirits, who might come during the night-watches and steal his grain. These imps are far more plentiful after sunset, he will tell you, and also that they wander abroad on hunting expeditions like the wild animals!

The myrmidons of Satan are supposed to more especially haunt or reside in very dense jungles, in nálláhs (stream-beds), amongst huge boulders or in ravines, and wherever there may be any natural phenomena that to them are inexplicable.

For instance, one of these terrifying "haunted" places was within about five hundred yards of the bungalow in which I resided for several years. It was a mysterious, dark, narrow cavern in the hill-side, some thirty feet deep, having a perpendicular descent, surrounded by jungle, and the hiding-place of countless bats and vampires. On one occasion, whilst I was absent on tour, a leopard killed a pig in the village, and, taking it into a field just outside, had enjoyed a good feast. When, at dawn, the villagers began to stir

themselves, they quickly saw the leopard, and gave chase with sticks and stones. It was driven off in this fashion, and said to have been seen fall into this cavern (the Malájk-hand). On my return, a fortnight later, I heard the story; so, in the hope of obtaining some leopard's claws and teeth, knowing that the animal must be dead by this time, I persuaded half a dozen men to lower me into the cavern with ropes. As far as could be gathered from the oldest local residents, I was the first to descend the "haunted" cavern which had been for so long the residence of Bhimsen the rain-god! Owing to the presence of so many bats the cavern was filled with an offensive smell. There was a sufficient supply of oxygen, however, and by the light of some burning grass, which had been thrown down to me, I discovered two other caverns leading from the main one, each very lofty and perfectly dark, one quite dry and the other damp and muddy. There were unmistakable indications of the presence of copper in the rocky walls, but there was no trace of the mysterious ogre or even the dead leopard. On seeing the smoke arising from the mouth of the cave, some Baigás crept cautiously up the hill-side to ascertain what it meant. When the rope-

men saw them they called, "Come and see the Sahib down the Malájkhand!" But the men fled swiftly, probably fearing that if the ogre had seized me they might be accused of having enticed me into his lair!

This place is one of the mysteries of nature that these simple folk cannot understand, so it is thought to be the haunt of an ogre or god. Bhimsen is supposed to have lived here in the "good old times," and one day, whilst he was enjoying some cooked rice and fish, his sister came into his presence when he least expected her. This so touched his dignity that he flew into a violent passion, refused to eat his food, and threw it away, whereupon it at once became petrified, and a hill a couple of hundred yards away is supposed to be his rice, and a heap of stones just below the mouth of the cavern by the footpath that crosses the hill is said to be the fish that the offended giant refused to eat!

Another of these so-called haunted places is Rabdá Pát, a very lonely wild spot, miles from any village. (See Illustration 4.) It is a portion of the River Sone which is supposed to be bottomless. Following a very zig-zag course through the mountains, the main stream suddenly cuts its way through a deep gorge

only three yards wide. Finding no other outlet, soon after it has emerged it makes its way between two steep hills, its bed at this part being very deep. From the other end, the stream continues its course through the mountains for over twenty miles without passing any human habitation, its waters affording refreshment only to denizens of the forest.

The extreme wildness of the scene has doubtless proved most impressive to the very few Europeans who have gazed upon it (probably not a dozen, the present Deputy-Commissioner being the only person I know who has visited the place). If *we* gazed in wonder at so wild a picture, it is not surprising that the ignorant demon-worshipper should stand in awe and feel himself to be in the presence of some supernatural power. Believing in ogres rather than in a gracious God, he supposes this pool to be the residence of Rabdá Pát, the imaginary local fiend. In this pool, clear as crystal at its edge, but deep and black in the centre, are innumerable fish, varying in size from minnows to those over a yard in length. I also saw traces of at least one crocodile here, and judging from the size of its foot-prints, I should say it must have been over three yards in length.

Numbers of Gonds and Baigás come annually to this pool to propitiate the local demon by sacrificing a pig or goat, or presenting some rice, and then eating a portion and feeding the fishes with the remainder. On my first visit the people told me, in a very fearful manner, that if any person dared to enter the water, the ogre of the pool would either drag him under, down, down, down to its hiding-place, or take the form of a tiger and seize him when he landed! My cook (a Christian Baigá, named Yohan) and I, nevertheless, indulged in a delightful bathe—the shade temperature being over a hundred degrees Fahr., and this made such an impression on the people of the nearest village (five miles distant) that I indirectly heard of it three years afterwards, although the Bráhmaṇ who told me did not suspect that I was the man who had escaped the awful ogre's clutches!

CHAPTER V

DEITIES AND DEMONS

THERE is scarcely an Evangelistic missionary in all India who has not heard, times without number, the apothegm, "We must follow the customs of our forefathers." It is a dictum alike with the Bráhmans of Benares and the wild men of the mountains. Let us, then, consider this excuse from the point of view of a Gond or Baigá.

Aborigines share with some of the more enlightened peoples of the human race a natural craving for a priestly intercessor. A priest (or "pujári") in Gondland may be a Gond, but is more often a Baigá. It goes without saying that he is generally an illiterate and exceedingly ignorant man. He does not, as a rule, devote the whole of his time to his religious calling, as do the Bráhman priests, or the fakirs and sádhus of the Hindus, but usually earns his livelihood as a farmer. There may be a "pujári" in each village, or one



5.—MUD BUNGALOW AT KHURSIPAR (*See Page 45*)



6.—OFF ON A PREACHING TOUR (*See Pages 49 and 57*)

may serve a group of villages, which office he passes on to his eldest son at death. For his services he is paid at the rate of so much grain per annum for each plough the people of his "flock" may have in use, which custom, by the way, finds its parallel in the Government plough-tax. A man is considered wealthy in proportion to the number of ploughs he has on his fields; he is a substantial farmer if he is using four or five, and well-to-do if he has over ten. Nor are these ploughs used simultaneously in different fields; one may see even a dozen ploughmen, one behind the other, patiently scratching at the same furrow!

The "pujári" also has great responsibilities resting upon him. He has to keep on friendly terms with the gods, in order that at least the normal amount of rain may fall; see that animals of the deer-tribe or wild pigs do not destroy the standing crops; also that tigers and other carnivora are kept from devouring men or cattle, and, in fact, that all manner of temporal preservation and blessings are secured to his adherents.

The question of dealing with sins that may have been committed by his people is given anything but a prominent place, for Gonds are only reminded of this possibility once a

year, when, during harvest-time, a "pardhán" comes along and sits in the courtyard until he is given grain, money, or possibly a cow or calf, for the purpose of the annual white-washing of those whose consciences are sufficiently active to accuse them of wrong-doing.

Pardháns are Gonds who are supposed to have inherited the power to grant or withhold forgiveness of sin—and they are about the most lying, deceitful, and drunken characters to be met with. If they are offered less than what they consider their proper fee, their curse is believed to consign a man to the torments of hell; but if they are paid the customary sum they profess to absolve their victim's sins! Far more attention, however, is paid to the question of preservation of self, family, cattle, and crops, the seeking of forgiveness of sin being as much an afterthought as was the raising of an altar to "The Unknown God" by the ancient Athenians.

Recognising their utter dependence upon a higher power for rain for their crops, they consider it to be the local priest's duty to annually propitiate Bhimsen, their rain-god, by the sacrifice of goats, fowls, etc.; then, just before the wet season (June) is due the farmers of surrounding villages assemble

for the performance of a ceremony called "bidri." Every man gives to the pujári a handful of each kind of grain he intends sowing, which this functionary mixes together and sows a little thereof beneath the "sájá" tree, under which the village Thákur-god is said to reside. Having done this he returns a handful of the mixed grain to each farmer, who in turn sows it in the middle of his growing crops, and by so doing each and all are supposed to anticipate the blessing of a satisfactory rainfall!

Burhá-dev is the chief god of these forest-dwellers. He is represented by a shapeless stone beneath a tree in the jungle, or near a village, and fowls, goats, cocoanuts, and perfectly new "dáru" (liquor) are offered to him as a sacrifice annually, in the month of June. From Burhá all kinds of blessings are asked, but chiefly those concerning the house and family of the suppliant.

Mátá is a goddess of the Hindus, but is also worshipped by the Gonds and Baigás. Sacrifices are made to her, in the usual Hindu fashion, in the month of January, lest she angrily smite man and beast with the dreaded small-pox. If this disease does break out, the sick person is not isolated, but eats, drinks,

sleeps, and lives with the others of his household as usual! Moreover, the Gonds practise an abomination which is ceremonially impossible amongst Hindus (except out-castes), viz., they even eat the flesh of cattle which have died with this terrible disease! At such times the villages are surrounded by the remains of carcasses in all stages of putrefaction!—a great attraction to vultures, jackals, hyenas, etc.

Bágh-dev ("bágh," tiger; "dev," god) is, as his name infers, a jungle-god, and is worshipped in January by the sacrifice of goats, fowls, or cocoanuts, in order that freedom from raids by tigers, panthers, and leopards may be enjoyed. When a man has been killed by a tiger, moreover, the villagers, after two or three days, form a formidable party, visit the fatal spot, and "bury" one of his bones (should any remain) in the hole of a tree near by. The tiger-god is then supposed to take possession of the pujári, who begins to rave and jump about in the most frantic manner, eventually pouncing upon a poor goat which has been brought from the village, and, seizing it by the throat with his teeth, bites the animal until the blood flows! I have not actually seen this done, but have been assured that such gruesome orgies do

take place. What, I believe, is more commonly practised, when the villagers congregate around the poor victim's skull and clothes, is to throw down a rupee. When the frenzied pujári seeks to pounce upon this rupee to pick it up with his teeth, he is set upon by the onlookers, who say that if he succeeds in lifting the rupee from the ground the tiger will kill more men; but if he is prevented it is an indication that their enemy will pass on to another jungle and harass the people there.

A few months ago, some natives remarked to me, after a man had been killed and devoured: "We cannot understand it! During the last four years, we have had man after man killed, so have changed our pujári no less than nine times. The most skilful and best-known within a day's journey have been here, and have done their best, yet they are all unable to stop these ravages!"

Such continuous defeats naturally weaken their faith in the pujári's power and ability to protect them from tigers, yet they would never listen to the suggestion that Bâgh-dev does not even exist, or that tigers are not possessed of supernatural powers.

In this connexion another incident may prove of interest. The father of one of my

schoolboys—a Gond, living in a village a mile distant—had been killed and devoured by a tiger. Having completed the usual ceremonies referred to above, the pujári conceived the idea of enticing the tiger-god out of this particular jungle, that he might take up his abode within the borders of an adjacent village! In order to accomplish this by no means unselfish end, the priest sacrificed a fowl to the tiger-god Bágh-dev, conveyed its carcase over the boundary of that especial village for whose well-being he was supposed to be responsible, and buried it in the jungle at Khursipár, a neighbouring hamlet. This proceeding naturally terrified the people of the latter location, and some of them came to me, much distressed and perplexed, to seek my advice:—

“Sahib, see what the people of Karamsára have done! They want the man-eaters to cease prowling around *their* village and take up their abode here in *our* jungles, so they have brought a fowl over the border and buried it here. What shall we do? We shall all be eaten up!”

It seemed useless to attempt to show them how utterly foolish were both fetish ceremonies and their fears in respect thereof, for

to suggest the non-existence of Bâgh-dev merely brought forth cynical smiles.

"If you really believe that the burying of that fowl by your neighbours will bring tigers to your very doors, then dig it up and bury it outside *my* bungalow!" I said. "I have a gun and you have not."

This palliative, however, did not meet with my friends' approval. They probably feared that if my offer were accepted, and I should afterwards be killed by a tiger, the "powers that be" might hold the village responsible for my demise.

Though many deaths are caused in these jungly districts by the ravages of wild beasts, a still greater number of persons are killed by poisonous snakes; therefore, the propitiation of Náng-dev (snake-god) is not overlooked. This god is annually offered gifts of fowls, cocoanuts and milk, or molasses and flour mixed, the month of August being chosen for the celebration of this rite, which usually takes place in front of, or upon, an ant-hill (some of which are even six feet high), this being the spot where the snake-god is supposed to reside. Unlike orthodox Hindus, the Gonds have no objection to killing, and, in many cases, eating, snakes! No graven

images are ever erected by these Aborigines, as by the Hindus, neither can one find an idol temple in their villages.

Not only when a man has been killed by a wild beast is the tiger-god supposed to have been displeased, but bodily sickness is also thought to be caused through the displeasure and malice of evil spirits. Especially is this applicable in the case of malarial fever, which is so prevalent in the jungles. Sometimes a man at his plough is suddenly seized with violent shivering, and has to leave his work. He can point to no cause, being quite ignorant of the fact that tiny mosquitos have introduced living parasites into his blood. Smitten down suddenly at regular intervals, perhaps daily, on alternate days, or every third day, he instinctively comes to the conclusion that a malicious imp is harassing him, and thereupon sends for the local priest, or a "baidya" (doctor), who, when consulted, professes to have ability to tell what evil spirit has seized his patient, and suggests a cure—an offering of fowls or cocoanuts.

Some have learned that, in cases of malaria, the better course is to visit the nearest mission station and beg a dose of Epsom salts and some quinine! No missionary

मतकोंको उठाता और जिलाता है वैसाही पुत्र भी जिन्हें चाहता है उन्हें जिलाता है । (१२) और पिता किसीका बिचार भी नहीं करता है परन्तु बिचार करनेका सब अधिकार पुत्रको दिया है इसलिये कि सब लोग जैसे पिताका आदर करते हैं वैसे पुत्रका आदर करें । (१३) जो पुत्रका आदर नहीं करता है सो पिताका जिसने उसे भेजा आदर नहीं करता है । (१४) मैं तुमसे सब सब कहता हूँ जो मेरा खचन सुनके मेरे भेजनेहारेपर विश्वास करता है उसको अनन्त जीवन है और दंडकी आज्ञा उसपर नहीं होती परन्तु वह मृत्युसे पार होके जीवनमें पहुँचा है । (१५) मैं तुमसे सब सब कहता हूँ वह समय आता है और अब है जिसमें मृतक लोग ईश्वरके पुत्रका शब्द सुनके और जो सुनके सो जीवेंगे । (१६) क्योंकि जैसा पिता आपहीसे जीता है तैसा उसने पुत्रको भी अधिकार दिया है कि आपहीसे जीवे । (१७) और उसको बिचार करनेका भी अधिकार दिया है क्योंकि वह मनुष्यका पुत्र है । (१८) इससे अचंभा मत करो क्योंकि वह समय आता है जिसमें जो कब्रोंमें हैं सो सब उसका शब्द सुनके निकलेंगे । (१९) जिससे भलाई करनेहारे जीवनके लिये जी उठेंगे और बुराई करनेहारे दंडके लिये जी उठेंगे ।

(२०) मैं आपसे कुछ नहीं कर सकता हूँ जैसा मैं सुनता हूँ वैसा बिचार करता हूँ और मेरा बिचार यथार्थ है क्योंकि मैं अपनी दृष्टा नहीं चाहता हूँ परन्तु पिताकी दृष्टा जिसने मुझे भेजा । (२१) जो मैं अपने विषयमें साक्षी देता हूँ तो मेरी साक्षी ठीक नहीं है । (२२) दूसरा हैं जो मेरे विषयमें साक्षी देता है और मैं जानता हूँ कि जो साक्षी वह मेरे विषयमें देता है सो साक्षी ठीक है । (२३) तुमने योहानके पास भेजा और उसने सत्यपर साक्षी दिई । (२४) मैं मनुष्यसे साक्षी नहीं लेता हूँ परन्तु मैं यह बातें कहता हूँ इसलिये कि तुम त्राण पावो । (२५) वह तो जलता और समकता बुझा दीपक था और तुम कितनी खेरलों उसके उजियालेमें आनन्द करनेको प्रसन्न थे । (२६) परन्तु योहानकी साक्षीसे बड़ी साक्षी मेरे पास है क्योंकि जो काम पिताने मुझे पूरे करनेको दिये हैं अर्थात् येही काम जो मैं करता हूँ मेरे विषयमें साक्षी देते हैं कि पिताने मुझे भेजा है । (२७) और पिताने जिसने मुझे भेजा आपही मेरे

should, therefore, go to isolated jungles without some elementary knowledge of medicine (which he may gain at such institutions as the Livingstone College, London), for his own health's sake, and also that he may not only be in a position to alleviate the bodily sufferings of those amongst whom he labours, but by so doing prove to them the fallacy of believing in witch-doctors, and also dispelling their fear of evil spirits.

Contrast our present use of antiseptics with the heathen practice of plastering cowdung over sores, also the applying of native liquor and the ground bark of a tree to a mass of proud flesh extending all over the back of the neck and head of a man who has been mauled by a tiger! No wonder that patients are brought to us with sores that have been open and discharging for nearly a year, when such remedies (!) as bamboo-scrapings (dust) mixed with lime, red gravel, or dust and water have been applied to the sufferer's wounds! Demoniactal possession is also still firmly believed in by the Gonds, the most popular remedy being the mixing of human hair with chillies and pig's excrement, then burning the same near the person possessed!

The following incident will show why many lives are lost through snake-bite. Seeing a native run past my bungalow, I asked what was the matter, and was told that a certain man in the village had been bitten on the hand by a snake. Snatching up my razor and a bottle of strong ammonia, I rushed off, and found the man in a state of semi-unconsciousness, and unable to recognise me. Applying a ligature, I, to the astonishment of the onlookers, proceeded to cut and suck the wound, and rub in some ammonia. Nearly half an hour afterwards the witch-doctor, who had been called, arrived upon the scene, and, without a glance at the man whose life had been in danger, began his preparations by placing a small light upon the ground, and a few grains of rice near it. Then a score of men gathered together in the hut, and chanting and the beating of tom-toms began in earnest. Presently three of the party were "seized" by evil spirits, and began to leap about like maniacs. Eventually, two of them, under the "guidance" of the evil spirit, approached the bitten man, and sucked first the wound on his hand, then the back of his neck, and, finally, lower down his spine. They then pronounced the man

"cured"; but I doubt if he would ever have been, had his wound remained unattended for nearly two hours!

I will conclude this chapter by briefly narrating a few of the awful instances of "demon possession" which have come under my notice whilst travelling from village to village on my preaching tours in Gondland.

In a certain courtyard, surrounded by an interested crowd, at the unlikely hour of two a.m., I saw a man leaping about in the most excited manner. Drawing closer to him, I was amazed to discover that he had thrust a large packing-needle through his tongue, in his extreme frenzy!

In another village, I saw a stout wooden cross erected, upon which was a very heavy chain. I was told that periodically a demon, called Gansán, took possession of a certain man, who ascended the cross, and, sitting astride the beam, beat himself severely with the aforementioned chain.

On another occasion, crowded into a tiny hut were nine or ten young Gonds, all wildly dancing, whilst others were chanting and beating tom-toms. Shaking their long hair from side to side, trembling from head to foot, they gave vent to the most unearthly

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shrieks, presently falling to the ground in an utterly exhausted condition.

May God speed the day when "the True Light, which lighteth *every* man that cometh into the world," shall dispel such pitiable darkness!

CHAPTER VI

A CHARACTER CONTRAST

LIVING but a few hundred yards from my bungalow in Khursipár (see Illustration 5) was a very old Gond, named Baihá Bhoi. The villagers believed him to be considerably more than one hundred years old; but their opinion was not very reliable, as they were all his juniors, and none of them able to count much above a score in arithmetic!

(Another Gond, on being asked his age, assured a missionary that he was "over one hundred years."

"Dear me!" said the missionary; "how old, then, would you take me to be?"

"Oh, I should think you are quite young," came the reply: "you can't possibly be more than *seventy*!"

From this it will be seen that birthdays are not so well kept in Gondland as in more civilised countries, the natives sometimes gauging their age by the number of famines they have survived.)

Baihá Bhoi was very infirm, and unable to walk beyond the outskirts of his village. His whole body was shrivelled, his face decidedly ugly, and he had an impediment in his speech. He spent most of his time sitting or lying upon a string cot, either smoking or sleeping. His manner of speech was exceedingly abrupt and uncouth, and altogether he was about the most superstitious, bigoted old Gond I ever knew.

Desiring to take his photo, one day I paid him a visit with my hand-camera, and found him squatting in a dark place, smoking. I did not ask him outright to let me take his likeness, lest he should have objected. For a long time several endeavoured to persuade him to come outside his house; but no, he remained obdurate and would not budge. Presently his eldest son came home, and succeeded in enticing him to sit in the sunlight. Whilst showing him a toy horse's head, a panther's tooth, etc., with which he was highly pleased, I seized my opportunity and took a snap-shot. He looked up innocently to see what I was doing, but he does not know to this day what happened during that second of time.

I had visited old Baihá Bhoi some time

before, and during our conversation about spiritual matters he suddenly exclaimed:—

“Heaven! What do *you* know about Heaven? I’ve actually been there! Have you?”

With great humility I replied in the negative, adding that as he was the first man I had ever met who had been so privileged, I should esteem it a favour to know what he saw, and also how it was he had returned to this sinful earth. I will give the story in his own words, which were delivered in a very impressive style:—

“Many years ago I fell ill and died. A Black Angel came and carried my spirit up three long ladders. On reaching the top I found myself in God’s Village. The Black Angel led me to a substantial house of brick, with a roof of baked tiles instead of mere thatch, which he told me was God’s House. As I stood in front of the doorway I tried to peep inside, but my eyes were dazzled with the brightness, and I was unable to distinguish anything. Standing thus, I heard a Voice, which was the voice of God, say:—

“‘Baihá Bhoi, what have you done?’

“‘Nothing wrong!’ said I. ‘I have made the marriage arrangements for three of my

four sons, and they are settled down. The fourth is young yet; had I lived longer, I would have seen him married also.'

" 'What have you eaten?' was then asked.

" 'Nothing that would defile a Gond,' I replied. 'I have never taken food or water from the hand of any but my own "gotra" (sub-division of caste), nor from any defiled person.'

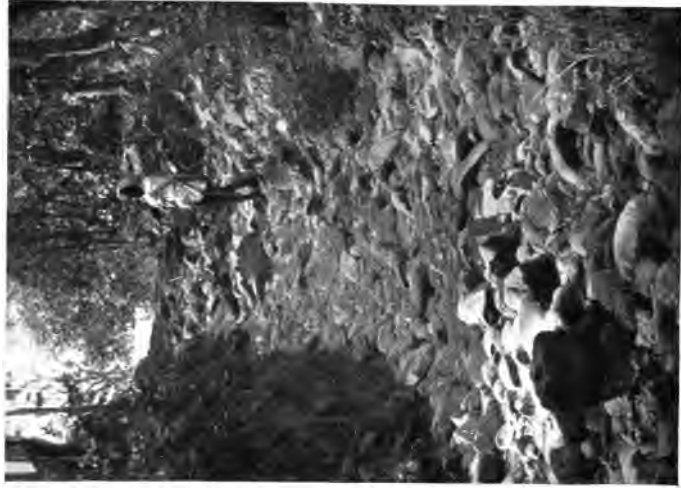
" 'Good! Pass on,' said the Voice. So the Black Angel led me through God's Village to a very long building, also of brick, and with a tiled roof. On going inside I found myself in a very long dormitory. On one side were countless beds made of webbing stretched across wooden frames, and very comfortable; on the other were long rows of bedsteads, with iron spikes and long nails sticking up, which would cause agony to anyone lying thereon.

" 'What do these mean?' I asked the Black Angel, pointing to the beds.

" 'Oh,' said he, 'the comfortable beds are for the righteous; but those with spikes and nails are for sinners. *You* are among the righteous.' Whereupon he lifted and laid me to sleep on one of the comfortable beds, where I remained for three days."



7.—A CONVERTED GOND (*See Page 53*)



8.—A JUNGLE "ROAD" (*See Page 56*)

"Only a dream," the reader may say. Nevertheless, Baihá Bhoi's sons averred that he was "dead" three days, and all his acquaintance fully believed that he had had a taste of Celestial bliss.

From this story the reader will see what is uppermost in the mind of a Gond or Baigá. "What have you done?" was asked, and the answer reveals their highest ambitions, viz., to marry, and then in turn to see their offspring married, that they may be kept from immorality, and that grandsons may be born, and thus credit be brought to the family! Girls are of less importance than boys amongst these tribes, as is invariably the case in semi-savage or heathen communities. Hidden beneath the portentous question, "What have you *eaten*?" and its significant answer, lurks the influence of that pernicious caste-system which is the universal bane of India.

Of the few score or so of Baigás who have joined the Christian Church in Gondland, none were more faithful than Yohan Badaru (Yohan—John). (See driver—Illustration 6.) Born about twenty years ago in a tiny grass hut far away in the dense jungles

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of the Satpurás, the abode of many tigers, bears, bison, and other wild animals, Yohan was brought up in true Baigá style. While he was yet young a terrible famine, followed by an outbreak of cholera, swept away thousands in his district, and the day soon came when poor Yohan and his tiny sister saw their parents become victims of this terrible disease. Both died within a few days of each other; but not before they, though poor superstitious heathens, had expressed a wish which afterwards proved to be the greatest blessing they could have possibly conferred upon their children. Friends and relations having left the neighbourhood, they told their children to find their way to a village some miles away, where a Christian teacher lived who was feeding the hungry and starving. They went, and were not only fed, but clothed and sent to the Church Missionary Society's orphanage not far distant.

In April, 1902, I was fortunate enough to secure Yohan as my cook. He proved to be eminently suited for the work, and having lived in the jungles was quite used to a rough, wandering life. For three years he was my Christian companion, and I could always rely upon him for sympathy and help.

When, for a year or two at a stretch, I have been far away from centres of civilization, his cheerful manner and genial optimism have been a constant source of encouragement to me; and even when I have been prostrate with fever in my mud bungalow, tent, or, at times, on a heap of straw in a disused cow-shed, he has attended me like a true comrade and friend.

One evening, a woman living near my house was taken seriously ill, and, although darkness was approaching, I had to set out to get advice from missionaries at the next station. This meant a tramp of fourteen miles, the fording of four rivers, and a journey through patches of dense jungle. Picking up my lantern and gun, I was about to start, when Yohan exclaimed:—

“You mustn’t go alone, Sahib. I’m coming with you. Let me carry the lantern.”

This was an act of pure unselfishness on his part, for it was a damp, cold November night, and he would have been far more comfortable wrapped in his blankets by the fireside; but he accompanied me willingly and cheerfully.

On another occasion, when I was expecting to receive news from England about my

dear mother (who I knew was lying at the point of death), and was unable to take the journey myself, he volunteered to go to the post-office for me, and in a most heroic manner travelled thirty miles, through jungle and swollen rivers, so great was his devotion. He was also a most consistent follower of Jesus Christ, not only ever ready to testify by word of mouth, but daily striving to show by his conduct that he was a Christian.

As a brother he was most jealous for the welfare of his only sister, especially so when she began to contemplate marriage. He used to confide in me concerning her suitor, and eventually found a young Christian Baigá who pleased both him and his sister. When the wedding took place, the proudest person present was the brother of the bashful bride!

In 1903 he accompanied me on a railway journey—for the first time in his life. When nearing a junction, at half-past two in the morning, the train collided with a stationary engine. Poor Yohan, although not much hurt, was, nevertheless, greatly alarmed, his very looks expressing the fact that he would rather travel in a bullock-cart, any day, than in a clumsy "rail-gári"!

I shall never forget his amazement when

I took him to Bombay. To him the houses were "like mountains," and on seeing the sea he innocently asked whether it flooded the city in rainy weather!

He was the last native I saw at the railway station when leaving for England. I cherished the hope of having his company and help on again returning to his sunny country; but, alas! it was not to be. On 21 May he wrote me a long and interesting letter, in reply to one I had sent him; but the following mail brought the sad news that he had drowned whilst bathing.

In comparing the Gond who is supposed to have come *from* Heaven, with the Baigá who has undoubtedly gone *to* Heaven, one cannot help glorifying God for the wonderful power of His transforming grace as displayed in this erstwhile dark and superstitious son of one of the semi-wild and untutored races of mankind.

Having shown what the grace of God can do in the case of a poor Baigá, let me now call attention to the happy face of a Gond (Illustration 7) who is now being trained for the work of an evangelist. He was soundly converted at Khursipár several years ago, and

has stood firm in spite of much persecution. Then, his father offered him two wives, cattle, and land if he would forsake the Christian religion; but Hirá Singh has remained steadfast, and his bright though quiet disposition and consistent living present a striking contrast to the drunken revellings and sinful ways of the Gonds of his village. He has shown himself to be a man of courage on many occasions, as when he descended a well and saved the life of a drowning boy. He also gives every prospect of displaying similar bravery in the holy war against the powers of darkness for which he has volunteered. There is material, indeed, amongst the Aborigines generally for the making of a strong and sturdy Church, and Hirá Singh is only one of many whose lives have been changed by the power of the Cross.

CHAPTER VII

PERILOUS TRAVELLING

ONE must be prepared for accidents and adventures if one intends to travel amongst the jungle-clad Satpurás, for it is a very wild country, and the risks incurred are many. Let not my younger readers think that missionary-life, on account of its romantic character, is more desirable than Christian work in the Homeland, for this feature soon wears off.

In the Bálághát District there are parts where it is impossible to travel in a vehicle of any description, owing to the rugged hillocks and entire absence of "roads." In most places, however, trees have been cut down, the tall grass removed, and the steep banks of water-courses and rivers deprived of their sharp angles; then a cart or two have been driven along the track, and others, following within a day or so, have helped to open up the "road" for public use.

Some time ago, when the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces was touring

in the hills, combining business with tiger-shooting, a new road had to be cleared through the jungle. A Gond headman of a village in this particular district said to me: "These native officials who are having the road made are *so* particular. We *are* having a hard time of it. Why, if we cut down the trees to within a foot of the ground they won't even let us leave the stump there!"

One winter, whilst touring with two other missionaries, their cook, Prabhu Dás (servant of the Lord), was travelling ahead with another man and a cart containing luggage. In the middle of a jungle that lay between two villages they came upon the stony road shown in Illustration 8. Prabhu Dás at once thought of the breakables, and wondered how it was possible for the cart to go trundling down such a place without its contents getting smashed. Being a Christian, he prayed earnestly that God would keep the crockery whole, and great indeed was his joy when, at the end of the journey, he found that nothing was broken! Strange to say, a year later, he had occasion to travel the same way, and on being asked, the following morning, if he had again prayed about the matter, he replied: "Oh, yes; but I took the pre-

caution to put some extra straw with the plates and dishes this time ! ”

Bullock-carts, as seen in Illustration 6, are the common conveyances in Gondland, and are not very expensive “carriages,” costing a mere sovereign or so. Although much slower than horseback riding, this style has its advantages when the missionary is on a long tour; for, instead of arriving at a village empty-handed, he can carry some straw for his tired bullocks, books, concertina, cooking-pots, foodstuffs, and, on the seat, a bundle of bedding. With an average pair of trotting-bullocks the extraordinary speed of four miles an hour can be attained even on a rough road ! (By the by, there are no speed-limit boards along the Bálághát “roads” !) These vehicles are not easily overturned; but this *does* happen sometimes, when, without a moment’s warning, one may find himself lying upon the roadside with his cart on top of him ! It is advisable, therefore, to allow plenty of time for the journey, lest one has an accident or breakdown, and, if delayed for long, be overtaken by nightfall in a lonely jungle.

The banks and beds of rivers and nálláhs in Gondland are most treacherous, as the

water and mud conceal boulders and holes in one's track. One day my wife was about to cross a river in a bullock-cart after a heavy rain, and whilst descending the bank one of the wheels suddenly sunk into a hole full of mud. She was not only thrown out, but, her dress catching in the wheel, dragged down the slope to the water's edge before the bullocks could be stopped.

Once, whilst camping, I had made a long preaching detour, and, on arriving at the village to which I had sent my tent, I was surprised to find that instead of being already erected as at other times (for it was noon) it had only just arrived. The explanation was, that, whilst fording a river *en route*, one of the buffaloes had become obstinate, and, pulling a wheel over a boulder near the bank, the heavy cart had overturned, tent and everything being precipitated into the water. As it was some time before the vehicle could be unloaded, righted, and reloaded, the effect that half-an-hour's immersion had upon such things as salt, Paisley flour, sugar, cocoa, books, medicines, clothes, etc., can be better imagined than described.

On another occasion my wife and I were driving across a stream, when the water,

proving to be deeper than we thought, began to cover the bottom of the vehicle. We also felt somewhat alarmed when one of the wheels began to ascend a hidden boulder, for we feared a repetition of the accident just referred to. However, the bullocks standing still, I threw my concertina into a bush to keep it dry, and jumped to *terra firma*; this altered the balance of the cart, and although the wheel had passed over a boulder, we fortunately escaped a dipping.

One cannot always enjoy (!) such experiences, however, for, in the remoter parts, between June and October, vehicular traffic is made impossible by the monsoons. The very tracks then become water-courses, huge holes are formed, and the nálláhs and rivers become treacherous, rushing torrents.

Yet another personal experience. On receiving news of my revered mother's decease, I went to see my fellow-missionaries at the next station. Whilst returning, I forded the River Jamunia, which was then only knee-deep, and after travelling another five miles found myself confronted by the River Banjar in full flood. It was, of course, impossible to cross this rushing torrent, which was quite fifteen feet deep, so I hastily returned; but,

alas! found the Jamunia, too, had swollen. Anxious to reach home that day I disrobed, and, together with the man and boy who were with me, entered the stream, holding each others' hands for safety; but the water being too deep for the lad, we had to beat a retreat. This particular ford is unusually dangerous on account of the many huge boulders in its bed. We then hastened a mile and a half to another ford, where the river-bed was level and the current less treacherous. Tying my clothes around my neck, and fixing my helmet tightly upon my head, I began to wade across. The current was very strong, so I found it necessary to fix my bamboo staff well into the sand and advance cautiously. When mid-stream, with the water up to my chin, a tall Gond, used to fording these rivers, came to my aid and helped me across, or I might have been carried off my feet by the flood.

One must be prepared for such experiences in the rainy season, as there are neither bridges nor boats. In a few places a ferry may be found, but these are merely hollowed logs and easily overturned.

One very rarely hears, however, of men being drowned whilst fording rivers, or

injured through being pitched out of bullock-carts, but natives are frequently killed on the roadsides by wild beasts. While an ordinary tiger will seldom interfere with a man unless molested (though he may attack the bullocks he is driving), there are man-eating tigers which prowl about jungle-roads and outskirts of fields in order to satisfy their thirst for human blood.

Last year, a man and his son were riding in a bullock-cart not very far from my bungalow, when a tiger suddenly sprang out of the bush (after the conveyance had passed, as usual). The bullocks took fright, but, fortunately, kept to the road, which at that place had a slight decline. For nearly a mile the tiger continued in hot pursuit, and then, just as the road began to ascend a very stony hill, and the bullocks slackened pace, they met two other men in a cart, who shouted so loudly that the tiger stopped, and, soon after, walked off into the jungle growling disappointedly.

Another sorry happening was the case of a man who had been to our Gospel meeting one night, and started for market the next morning. As he did not return by nightfall, his friends were alarmed; so I formed a

search-party the next day and started out. About a mile along the road, at a spot where the grass on one side had been burned, stood a low bush, from behind which it was evident, from paw-marks in the sand, that the tiger had sprung upon the poor fellow as he was passing. We followed the ghastly trail through the tall grass on the opposite side of the road, but, eventually, found only the man's stick, clothing, skull, and two bones.

CHAPTER VIII

ITINERARY WORK

ON our arrival at a village, the news very quickly spreads that the "pádri-sáhib" (missionary) has come, and within a few minutes most of the men who are within call come together, and if the "mem-sáhib" should accompany him, the women will also assemble and stand behind the men, or sometimes a meeting is held specially for them. (See Illustration 9.) The site may be a sunny spot in the "High Street," or a shaded courtyard of the headman, with, if possible, a bamboo fence a few yards in front, behind which the women can hear the singing and preaching.

After a courteous inquiry about the state of the crops, etc., the meeting invariably commences with a "bhajan" (hymn). This arrests their attention, and very often introduces the message we have come to deliver. These "bhajans" are usually composed by

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Indian Christians and set to Oriental tunes. The following are a few stanzas of one in use :—

Saba dina náhin barobar bíten, kabahu tapana,
 kabhu chháhn.
 Bádala ranga ranga jasa hote, tasa jaga badalata
 jáhí,
 Rájá, parajá, dhaní, bhíkári, saba ko hai gati yáhi,
 Jaga men kabhu ánsóo, kabhu hánsí, ságara jasa
 laharáhn,
 Yá bhawsindhu bícha bahutere, mukti ratana
 bisaráhn,
 Sochahu mana yá chanchala jaga men, kauna dayála
 bacháhi?
 Dínadayál Kripánidhi Yishoo, jokhima pára lagáhi.
 Sata bishawásahu langara jáno, Khrísta tíra
 thaharáhi,
 Dása sadá laulína raho tuma, tau kachhu shanká
 náhn.

Which is by interpretation :—

All days do not pass alike; sometimes there is sunshine and sometimes shade. Just as the colours of the clouds, so this world goes on changing; whether kings or subjects, rich or poor, this is the common lot of all. In this world we sometimes have tears and sometimes laughter, just like the waves of the ocean; but generally, men in the middle of this great sea forget the pearl of Salvation. Think, O my soul, in this changeable world, who will have mercy and save you? The merciful, compassionate Jesus, He will carry you across this perilous sea. Make sincere faith your anchor and Christ the shore; remain always His faithful servant, and there will be nought to fear.



9.—MRS. McMILLAN WITH GOND WOMEN (*See Page 63*)



10.—BENEATH THE SACRED "PIPAL" TREE (*See Page 66*)

Having sung such a hymn, the missionary proceeds to tell, in the simplest possible way, the "old, old story," or that phase of it which under the circumstances seems most applicable. Should there be any "scholars" in the village, they usually purchase a Gospel, hymn-book, or booklet (a farthing or a half-penny each), and these are sometimes read aloud in the presence of others, thus preparing the way for the missionary's next visit. When on extensive tours one comes into contact with thousands of Hindus who have penetrated into the hills for the purpose of seeking cultivable land, or in pursuit of other business, and to them also the "good tidings" is told.

Winter is a season when a European can best accomplish extensive itineration in India. The tropical sun makes it more or less dangerous in the hot weather, and it is equally impracticable in the wet season, not only on account of the torrential rains and difficulties of travel, but also because most of the villagers, being agriculturists, are generally fully engaged.

It is customary to take a small hill-tent when on long tours. Usually, the tent is taken down at sunrise whilst the missionary is eating his "chhotí házrí" (little breakfast)

in the open air, or having a parting word with the headman of the village, the cooking-utensils, tent, and other baggage being meanwhile packed into a cart, and afterwards taken to another village a few miles distant.

The missionary generally visits the villages *en route*, holds open-air meetings, and invites the people to come, after their evening meal, to a large meeting in the new camp, when the Gospel is not only preached and sung, but also illustrated by magic-lantern.

The afternoon affords an opportunity for visitation and getting into touch with the people. Almost invariably the sick and suffering are brought to the "pádri-sáhib" for treatment, for they say, "If you come to prescribe for our souls, you will surely not go away without treating our sick bodies." Emissaries also come on behalf of sufferers from malaria, coughs, skin-diseases, dysentery, ophthalmia, and others with sores and wounds, or various aches and pains. Once or twice even the blind have come seeking sight. For such it is a red-letter day, an opportunity not to be missed. In Illustration 10 a hill-tent can be seen pitched beneath a sacred "pipal" tree (the haunt of the goddess of small-pox), upon a rough ploughed field,

where the headman and a deputation have come to ask me to open a boys' school in their village.

Some time previously, I ascended a plateau where many thousands of trees were being felled, sawn into lengths for railway-sleepers, and carted away to the railway some seventy miles distant. This necessitated the congregating together of hundreds of men from far and near—Gonds and Baigás for the felling of the trees, skilled sawyers from Guzerát and Kathiáwár, Hindu peasants to cart away the "sleepers," and educated men from Indian cities to superintend the work.

To avoid travelling in the heat of the day, we joined a party of cartmen who were ascending a mountain-pass by moonlight. On reaching the summit, about nine o'clock, we soon came upon a very large banyan-tree near the roadside, which at once attracted our attention. Finding a party of about sixty men here (each with his pair of bullocks and cart), it was decided to bivouac beneath this giant tree and proceed further early next morning. We had some pleasant conversation around the fires, and after a while all gathered together for a meeting. As there was a small village hard by, I sent messengers to invite any who

cared to come and hear the news the "pádrisáhib" had brought. They soon returned, saying that the people would not believe that a European had arrived in the night and could be purposing to lodge beneath a tree! I sent the messengers back again, this time with my concertina, thinking the villagers would at once believe; but no, the headman only abused them and drove them away, saying, "If you don't go quickly, I'll march you and your so-called Englishman off to the police-station in the morning! Fancy a sáhib condescending to sleep beneath a tree on a wintry night like this!" So the meeting proceeded without the presence of these sceptical Gonds. Afterwards I crept beneath my buffalo-cart, and, surrounded by snorting cattle, each tied to its own particular vehicle, enjoyed (?) a solitary "Watch-Night" service, and saw the last of 1903.

As has already been mentioned, there are districts where it is impossible to drive even a clumsy bullock-cart, and where walking is in some respects preferable to horseback-riding. March and April are the best months for walking-tours in the hills, if one is ever able to study his comfort or convenience. Between November and March the tall grass (from four

to even fourteen feet high) is heavy with dew or hoar-frost until several hours after sunrise; whereas, after February the dews are not so heavy, the frosts cease, and the greater part of the grass has been consumed by extensive jungle-fires. This makes a great difference, for the pain and inconvenience caused by walking through the tall, sharp grasses of the jungles cannot be easily explained.

The following incident is typical of wet-season visits to villages in the neighbourhood. My wife and I once set out on foot to spend the night in a village a few miles distant, taking a man to carry our bedding, etc. We arrived about sunset, and went to the house of the headman, who appeared somewhat troubled on seeing us. Knowing from experience the cause of his embarrassment, I speedily set his mind at rest by assuring him we had brought everything we needed, only requesting him to provide us with a pot of water. On hearing this his wrinkled face broadened into a smile. Our "room" for the night was half a cattle-shed, only a low bamboo partition about four feet high separating us from some bullocks. Prior to calling together our audience we had supper,

and whilst thus engaged the other occupants of the "house" were continually "chewing the cud." Could they have been reflecting as to the reason of such unwonted creatures as ourselves intruding upon the privacy of their domicile? Anyhow, presently one, intent, doubtless, on seeking a well-earned repose, suddenly gave an extra deep sigh and blew out our solitary light, leaving us in total darkness! By this time, however, the moon had risen, and, on going outside, we found that almost the entire population of the village had assembled. We had a happy hour and a half of preaching and singing the Gospel, our audience appearing greatly interested, after which we retired to our quarters for the night. For reasons easily guessed, we preferred sleeping on the ground to lying upon the cots kindly offered by our host!

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As the school-house at Khursipár was some distance from the village, I had a grass-building erected in which to hold meetings. (See Illustration 11.) The thatch was made of wild date-palm leaves, and the walls of grass spread over, and tied on to, a split bamboo framework. These grass screens were

hung on bamboos, and after each meeting hoisted up and firmly secured to the roof, lest the cattle should eat the hay! There was accommodation for about sixty persons, who sat in perfect comfort upon the bare earth. This building was erected for the sum of one rupee nine annas (two shillings and a penny), and Sabbath by Sabbath my wife and I, accompanied by Hirá Singh (a Gond convert) and Yohan and his wife, would meet here with the villagers, and each of the five testify briefly in turn. The sequel should be added that after we left the country to visit England a new inhabitant of the village removed the "church" to the other end of the "street," and, re-erecting it, converted it into a "most desirable villa residence"!

CHAPTER IX

MAN-EATERS AND SNAKES

It has been computed that more than twenty-four thousand human beings, besides nearly a hundred thousand head of cattle, were killed by wild animals and snakes in India in the year 1904. These appalling figures show the dangers to which the outlying populations are still exposed from beasts of prey.

Perhaps a few instances which have come under my own notice will be of interest, if not to the senior, at least to the junior portion of my readers.

Of the fifty or more persons I have known who were killed and devoured by large carnivora, the last was a poor woman who went with about a dozen others into a jungle to cut grass for thatching. She and her son had been working side by side for some time, when he left her, saying he was just going to have a smoke with the others of the party. When he returned, a few

minutes later, his mother was nowhere to be seen. Then the awful truth dawned upon him that she had been carried off by a tiger.

A few weeks before this happened, a man of Khursipár met with a similar fate when I was away on tour. Together with a companion and little Jhítu (one of my schoolboys) he went out to cut firewood. The cart being loaded, he was just about to harness the bullocks, when a tiger sprang upon him and dragged him into the jungle, and he was seen no more.

On another occasion, a Gond, with his wife and son, were fishing, when, without the slightest warning, a tiger sprang out, and, brushing past the woman and boy, seized the man, and began to make off with him into the bush. Shouting wildly, the mother and son succeeded in arresting the steps of their enemy; but only for a moment, however, for it turned and glared so savagely that they were terrified and fled, leaving the tiger to carry the unfortunate victim to its lair.

About two o'clock one day a Gond ran into my house, shouting, "Sahib, come quickly! A man has just been carried off by a tiger!" Snatching up my gun, sun-helmet and jacket, I followed my friend to

a field half a mile from the village, where the young man (who was a brother of one of my schoolboys) had last been seen. Finding a crowd of men, women, and children wailing, I formed a search-party from among the former, and, plunging into the tall grass, followed the narrow trail of the tiger carrying off its human prey. We continued cautiously for over half a mile, stepping lightly over thick creepers and crawling under bushes, until we came to a tree whereon perched several crows intently watching something upon the ground. This was sufficient proof that we were within a dozen paces or so of the object of our quest, and had, no doubt, disturbed the animal from its gruesome meal. In another moment we discovered the poor fellow's body, which was partly devoured although scarcely cold. Hoping to get an opportunity of putting an end to the brute, I, with a Gond comrade, ascended a tree and hid among the leaves, the remainder of the search-party going back to the village. Towards sundown we heard the animal stealthily creeping through the tall grass, evidently bent on resuming its feast; but, unfortunately, the shouts of the returning villagers frightened

it into its lair, and I was baffled in my attempt to avenge human blood.

One afternoon, three men were driving some bullocks along a road to market. Whilst walking in single file behind the team, a tiger suddenly sprang out upon the last man, and dragged him away into the jungle. The next day I, with a small party of men, set out in search; but, alas! found only the upper part of the poor fellow's body. Quietly erecting a small platform in the nearest tree, about twelve feet from the ground, I, with a Baigá, ascended, hoping to get a fatal shot. We had not been watching long when out came a magnificent tiger and tigress in scent of their prey. Unfortunately, they were at our rear, so I could not take aim, and to have made the slightest movement would have attracted their attention. After at least ten minutes' anxious watching, anticipating every moment they would change their position, we had to suffer the awful chagrin of seeing the well-satisfied pair walk quietly away in the direction from which they had come, the tall grass hiding them from view in an instant. Fearing lest we might possibly encounter them in the growing darkness, we deemed it

expedient to make ourselves comfortable (!) in the tree till morning, when the anxious villagers turned out *en masse* to escort us home.

That same afternoon, news came from another district that a man had been killed by a tiger whilst grazing some buffaloes. One of the herd had charged the beast as though to protect its keeper; but it was dragged away, and its bloodless carcase was afterwards found in a dry stream-bed. The herdsman's body was carried in an opposite direction, where we discovered it the following afternoon, the tiger having eaten one of the hands, and, strange to say, had deposited the wristlet on the man's bare back as he lay face downwards.

Panthers and leopards, too, are most destructive in India, killing, in 1904, about four hundred persons and nearly fifty thousand head of cattle. They are very daring, and will enter villages and houses, whereas tigers never venture within the precincts of a human habitation. They also climb trees, like the jaguar of South America.

Illustration 12 shows a good specimen of a male panther—fortunately beyond the power of doing any harm!

One day (several men and a number of cattle had been recently killed in a certain jungle), hearing that a cow had been seized by a "tiger" and half-devoured, I made my way thither, secreted myself in a tree, and with loaded gun awaited events. In about half an hour a fine panther made its appearance, only to receive a bullet in its chest, which caused it to fall—but only for an instant, for, rising again with a terrific roar, it escaped down a dry nálláh (stream) bed and out of sight. I immediately descended from my hiding-place, and, with a dozen natives, proceeded in that direction, hoping to find its lifeless body. Presently, one of my men thought he heard a rustle in the grass, so another of the party ascended a tree near the spot, and came into full view of the creature, apparently dead. To make sure, however, he dropped a twig, when up sprang the panther with an angry roar. The men fled in all directions, and I was left alone in the nálláh-bed (fortunately, hidden by the tall grass) with my gun levelled ready to fire. Knowing now that the animal had plenty of strength remaining, we had to continue our search very warily. After a while, a Gond discovered the whereabouts

of the brute from a tree-top, so, climbing to the same vantage-point, and holding on to a branch with both legs and an arm, I took steady aim and fired. After three growls the destructive beast rolled over—dead. With great rejoicing, the natives hoisted the carcase on a pole and bore it off to the village in triumph.

The cobra, like the panther and leopard, is also more to be feared than a tiger, for it will enter inhabited dwelling-houses, and when driven to bay is extremely ferocious. Nearly twenty-two thousand persons were reported to have died from snake-bite in India during 1904.

One morning, while my wife was teaching a class of boys on the veranda, a little fellow told her that a snake had entered the house. Thinking it was, perhaps, only a small one, she, with some of the scholars, searched the place. After a while, they saw a small portion of its body projecting from behind a box in a store-room; whereupon all pressed the box against the wall with all the physical force they could command, with the intention of crushing the reptile to death. Imagine their surprise, however, when, on removing the box, with the expectation of finding the said

reptile defunct, they were horrified to see a huge cobra, with head erect and inflated hood, hissing defiantly at them. Thinking "discretion to be the better part of valour," they left the room with great celerity, pulling the door hard after them, thus making the enemy a prisoner. On my return, the door was again opened, revealing the cobra still ready for fight; but a well-aimed shot from my gun placed it for ever *hors de combat*, after leaving it for a while wriggling in three pieces upon the ground!

CHAPTER X

UNCLAIMED WEALTH

IN the Fortieth Statistical Abstract the population of India is stated to be 294,361,056; over 200,000,000 of these are Hindus, some 60,000,000 Mohammedans, and only 2,923,241 Christians. The rapid increase in the number of the latter during 1891-1901, however, is noteworthy. The Salvationists grew from 1,286 to 18,960, or at the rate of 1,374 per cent. The Quakers (in the Central Provinces) showed the next largest increase, from 112 to 1,309, or at the rate of 1,068 per cent. The Congregationalists came third, with an increase of 378 per cent, their numbers growing from 7,914 to 37,874.

Whilst so many millions are yet un-Christianised, it is encouraging to know there are many enterprising Gospel Agencies at work, not only among the Hindus in more civilised parts, but away in the more neglected provinces, where the people of



11.—TWO-SHILLING "CHURCH" (*See Page 70*)
(Man in front is shouldering a plough)



12.—"BORNE HOME IN TRIUMPH" (*See Page 76*)

whom this book has treated, also the Bhils, Kols, Kurkus, Santháls, and other tribes, still live in their almost aboriginal state.

From amongst the many orphan children left by the famines of 1897 and 1900, there are now growing up young Gond and Baigá men and women who, in many cases, have proved as capable as Hindu students in tackling the curriculum of teaching set by the English Government.

Respecting the natural products of this extensive country, rich mineral deposits have recently been discovered in the eastern Satpurás, and thousands of coolies are pouring into the Bálághát District, who, by merely picking at the surface-soil, are unearthing countless tons of manganese ore of excellent quality. Should not the Christian Church, in like manner, press forward into the hills and claim these poor Aborigines, who, though rough as their native ore, may yet become valuable and brilliant gems in the Redeemer's crown? If we fail to carry out the Great Commission, there can be no doubt that these peoples will all become Hinduised as the years roll on.

Here, then, are millions of souls for whom the reader is asked to exercise importunate

prayer and practical sympathy. There are at present two great Societies labouring amongst the Gonds and Baigás, viz., the American Methodist Episcopal Mission (to which the Bálághát Mission to the Gonds has been recently affiliated) and the Church Missionary Society, which has been prosecuting a good work in the district of Mandlá since the early eighties. The London Missionary Society (under whose auspices the author will soon return to India), at their out-station at Dudhl, and the Kurku and Central India Hill Mission, are also doing admirable work amongst Aborigines.

It has been argued by some that the heathen are best left alone to "their own religion"—that there is sufficient in the ancient creeds, to which they are so well accustomed, to effect all the enlightenment and development of which they are capable. But to such I would humbly suggest that, "by its fruits," Christianity has proved itself to be the *supreme religion of the world*, for "every great truth in the non-Christian religions is found in a purer and richer form in the Christian religion. It is true that Hinduism teaches the immanence of God; it is true that Mohammedanism teaches the sovereignty of God; it is true that

Buddhism teaches the transitoriness of our present life; it is true that Confucianism teaches the solemn dignity of our earthly relationships and our human society. But are not all these truths in Christianity also? And in Christianity each one of these truths is balanced by its just corrective, which is absent from the non-Christian religions. Hinduism teaches that God is near, but it forgets that He is holy. Mohammedanism teaches that God is great, but forgets that He is loving. Buddhism teaches that this earthly life of ours is transitory, but it forgets that we have immortal souls. Confucianism teaches that we live in the midst of a great framework of holy relationships, but it forgets that in the midst of all these we have a living help and a personal fellowship with the eternal God, in whose lasting presence is our home."

Then, again, some say: "We do not see the advisability of giving money for the evangelization of the heathen abroad, when there are so many 'heathen' at home." To such I would suggest, that there is no "abroad" or "at home" in the universal Kingdom of Christ; for, "God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined the

84 JUNGLE PIONEERING IN GONDLAND

times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us" (Acts xvii. 26, 27); and that, before His glorious ascension, our Lord gave His disciples both command and promise: "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20).

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand;
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand;
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.

What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile;
In vain with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strewn;
The heathen, in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone.

Can we, whose souls are lighted

With wisdom from on high—

Can we to men benighted

The Lamp of Life deny?

Salvation! O salvation!

The joyful sound proclaim,

Till each remotest nation

Has learnt Messiah's name.

Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,

And you, ye waters, roll,

Till, like a sea of glory,

It spreads from pole to pole;

Till o'er our ransomed nature,

The Lamb for sinners slain,

Redeemer, King, Creator,

In bliss returns to reign.—HEBER.

May this little book, with its simple narratives and sketches of heathen life and customs, not only arouse active interest on behalf of "men benighted," but also lead some to adopt a course of personal sacrifice, in order that the "Lamp of Life," already lighted in many dark places of the earth, may be well replenished with "pure beaten oil, that it may burn continually"!

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Correspondence and remittances should be addressed to the Hon. Sec., MISS FIELD, "Hillcrest," Eaton Road, Sutton, Surrey; or to MR. LAMPARD, Mission House, Balaghat, Central Provinces, India.

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